



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Industry confirms support for red raspberry rules

OLYMPIA – Following an advisory ballot and a Jan. 18 hearing in Whatcom County, the state Department of Agriculture today announced its intent to move ahead on rules establishing grades and standards for fresh raspberries sold for processing.

The red raspberry rules, which are to go into effect June 1, were on-hold pending further review of the small business economic impact statement that analyzed the cost of complying with them. A legislative rules review committee finding that the impact study did not pursue methods to reduce costs on small businesses prompted the review.

Advisory ballots were mailed in December to all growers, processors, and grower-processors on record with the Department of Agriculture to determine their level of support for the rules. Of 231 ballots mailed, 102 were returned. A total of 64 percent support the rules.

Of 44 persons who provided oral or written testimony, 37 indicated support for the rules. Most testified either that the impact statement was adequate, or that it overstated the costs to the industry. Seven testified that the impact statement was not adequate, and that they opposed the rules.

Department of Agriculture is in the process of developing additional rules to determine how red raspberries harvested outside of Washington and used for raspberry puree can comply with the rules to reduce the potential for adulteration. The goal of these rules is to protect consumers without unreasonably restricting trade.

In 2000, Washington growers produced 35,625 tons of red raspberries on 9,500 acres with a production value of nearly \$25.9 million. Washington is ranked first in the nation for raspberry production.

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